

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SAM-01 OMB-01 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /071 W

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R 200946Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5863

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 10558

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, MORG, LE

SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT CONSIDERING ARMY REFORMS

1. SUMMARY. THE KARAME CABINET IS STUDYING MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE ARMY'S PERFORMANCE, CORRECT CONFESSIONAL IMBALANCES AT VARIOUS RANKS, AND HOPEFULLY OVERCOME THE PROBLEM OF PRIVATE MILITIAS. A DRAFT CONSCRIPTION LAW, AN EMBRYONIC PLAN TO DISBAND MILITIAS, AN ARMY REORGANIZATION SCHEME, AND OFFICER REAPPOINTMENTS ARE THE PRINCIPAL PROGRAMS. THOUGH MOST ARE STILL IN THE EARLY PLANNING STAGE, THESE MEASURES ADDRESS SOME REAL ISSUES AND INDICATE A SERIOUS DESIRE FOR ARMY REFORM. END SUMMARY.

2. THE KARAME GOVT IS BEGINNING TO FOCUS ON ARMY RE-  
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ORGANIZATION AS A PRIORITY NEED. CONFESSIONAL IMBAL-

ANCE AT MANY RANKS, OUTDATED MILITARY PLANNING, AND ARMY IMPOTENCE IN THE FACE OF PROLIFERATING PRIVATE MILITIAS ARE SEEN AS MAJOR PROBLEMS THAT AGGRAVATED THE RECENT CIVIL STRIFE. KARAME'S PROGRAM IS TAKING THE FOLLOWING FORMS:

A. CONSCRIPTION LAW. THE GOVT HAS REVIVED A BILL, SHELVED FOR SOME TIME BY PARLIAMENT, THAT WOULD ESTABLISH COMPULSORY MILITARY SERVICE FOR ALL MALES 18 YEARS OF AGE. THE ARMY COMMAND IS BEHIND THE MEASURE TO GET NEEDED MANPOWER, AND INTMIN CHAMOUN IS SAID TO BE STRONGLY IN FAVOR. POLITICALLY, THE BILL WOULD SERVE TWO PURPOSES: FIRST, IT WOULD HELP RESTORE CONFESSONAL BALANCE AT THE LOWEST RANKS, WHERE THE MOSLEM VOLUNTEERS GREATLY OUTNUMBER CHRISTIANS; AND SECONDLY, IT WOULD PULL MANPOWER AWAY FROM PRIVATE MILITIAS, THEREBY HOPEFULLY UNDERCUTTING THIS INTRACTABLE PROBLEM. OPPOSITION TO THE BILL HAS CENTERED AROUND THE VIEW OF DRUZE POLITICIAN KAMAL JUMBLATT--AND HE HAS GOTTEN SUPPORT FROM PRIMIN KARAME--THAT REORGANIZATION OF THE ARMY'S TOP COMMAND MUST PRECEDE UNIVERSAL CONSCRIPTION, BECAUSE CONSCRIPTION WOULD GIVE THE COMMANDERS POWER OVER A VASTLY EXPANDED FORCE (UP TO 8 BRIGADES OF OVER 30,000 MEN FROM ITS PRESENT LEVEL OF 3 BRIGADES OF 16,700 MEN). OTHER OBSTACLES ARE SAID TO BE THE COST OF THE CONSCRIPTION PROGRAM (PUT AT LL 125 MILLION ABOUT DOLS 55 MILLION) AND THE LACK OF BARRACKS AND OTHER FACILITIES. THE BILL WAS TOBE DEBATED AUG 14, BUT PARLIAMENT FAILED TO GET A QUOUM. PARLIAMENT IS NOT DUE TO MEET AGAIN ON SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES UNTIL OCTOBER.

O. DISBANDING MILITIAS. GOVT LEADERS APPEAR AGREED THAT THE NUMEROUS PRIVATE MILITIAS ARE DANGEROUS TO THE REPUBLIC, BUT THEY SEEM POWERLESS TO COPE WITH THE PROBLEM. STRENGTHENING THE ARMY AND IMPROVING THE PEOPLE'S SENSE OF APRTICIPATION IN THE GOVT ARE SEEN AS THE BEST LONG-TERM HOES. MEANWHILE, CHAMOUN HAS COME OUT IN FAVOR OF FORCING THE MILITIA TRAINING CAMPS TO SHUT DOWN--AND HE HAS REPORTEDLY CLOSED ONE OF HIS OWN, TURNING IT INTO A "SHOOTING CLUB." JUMBLATT AND PHALANGE LEADER GEMAYEL HAVE MADE PIOS NOISES ABOUT THE NEED TO DISBAND THE MILITIAS, BUT EACH EXPRESSES "CONDITIONS" IN EFFECT RESTATING THE FAMILAR POLITICAL POSTIONS THA EACH HAS USED TO JUSTIFY MILITIAS

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IN THE FIRST PLACE. SO FAR, THE POLITICAL MANEUVERING ON THIS ISSUE HAS NOT REACHED A SERIOUS STAGE.

C. REORGANIZATION OF THE COMMAND. PRES FRANGIE MET WITH TOP MILITARY COMMANDERS AUG 13 TO DISCUSS REORGANIZATION OF THE ARMY COMMAND STRUCTURE. THE MEETING WAS PROMINENTLY FEATURED IN THE BEIRUT PRESS. ACTION OF THE ARMY COMMAND STRUCTURE. THE MEETING WAS

PROMINENTLY FEATURED IN THE BEIRUT PRESS. ACCORDING TO REPORTS, THE MEASURES UNDER CONSIDERATION INCLUDE (A) ESTABLISHMENT OF A SEVEN- MAN COMMAND COUNCIL THAT WOULD ASSUME SOME POWERS OF THE PRESENT COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF AND WOULD REPRESENT THE SIX MAJOR RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES (THE MARONITES HAVING TWO SEATS); (B) ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ARMY INSPECTORATE ATTACHED DIRECTLY TO THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE; AND (C) REVISION OF THE PROMOTION SYSTEM, LIMITING THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF'S SOLE POWER TO PROMOTION OF OFFICERS ONLY THROUGH THE RANK OF CAPTAIN, WITH THE PROJECTED COMMAND COUNCIL GETTING POWER TO PROMOTE HIGHER OFFICERS (UP TO GENERAL OFFICERS, WHO ARE NAMED DIRECTLY BY THE PRESIDENT AND COUNCIL OF MINISTERS). THE THRUST OF THESE PROPOSALS IS TO DILUTE THE POWER OF THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, TRADITIONALLY A MARONITE, AND GIVE NON-CHRISTIANS IN THE MILITARY MORE OF A HAND IN POLICY.

D. NEW APPOINTMENTS. WHILE THE ABOVE STRUCTURAL CHANGES ARE BEING DEBATED, THERE CONTINUE TO BE UNCONFIRMED REPORTS THAT SUNNI, SHI'A, AND DRUZE OFFICERS ARE BEING NAMED TO HIGH STAFF POSITIONS REDUCING THE PROPORTION OF MARONITES. AND RUMORS PERSIST THAT COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ISKANDER GHANEM WILL BE REPLACED BY THE CURRENT G-2 JULES BOUSTANY. BOTH MEN ARE MARONITES. HOWEVER, THE VERY FACT THAT THIS RUMOR IS BEING CIRCULATED WIDELY MAY CAUSE THE PRESIDENT TO SETTLE ON ANOTHER CHOICE OR KEEP GHANEM UNTIL NEXT YEAR.

3. COMMENT: THESE MEASURES SHOW THAT MODERATE CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS ARE GROPING FOR A CONSENSUS ON STRENGTHENING THE ARMY AND MAKING IT MORE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE POPULATION. THIS IS WIDELY BELIEVED TO BE A WAY OF REVERSING THE DETERIORATION OF GOL AUTHORITY THAT ACCOMPANIED THE RECENT CIVIL STRIFE. ANY FIRM CONSENSUS IS STILL A LONG WAY OFF, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND THE MILITIA PROBLEM MAY PROVE IMPOSSIBLE TO OVERCOME, BUT AT LEAST THOUGHT IS BEING GIVEN TO SOME SERIOUS FLAWS IN THE ARMY'S MAKEUP.  
GODLEY

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